

Restaurant and Take-Out Safety

These days, many people eat out or take home ready-made meals. Eating in a restaurant, cafeteria, or a fast-food place can be safe and fun. But you should take steps to be sure your food is safe. Follow these simple rules for food safety.

If you leave food out for more than 2 hours, throw it away.

Germs that make food go bad can grow if you don't keep food at the right temperature. Store food in the fridge or freezer or in the oven/stove.

- Keep hot foods in the oven/stove at 145 degrees F or higher.
- Keep cold foods at 40 degrees F or lower in the fridge or freezer.

What are the safety rules for hot food?

When you buy hot cooked food, eat it within 2 hours or keep it heating in the oven at 165 degrees F or higher. That will keep germs from growing.

What are the safety rules for cold food?

Cold food should also be eaten within two hours or put in the fridge or freezer for later.

How should I reheat a meal?

Follow these rules for meals you buy hot or cold.

- Heat food until it is hot and steaming (at least to 165 degrees F).
- Bring gravy to a rolling boil.
- When reheating food in a microwave, cover the food and stir it for even cooking. Turn the dish by hand once or twice while cooking. Cold spots let germs live and can make you sick.

What if I'm eating at a restaurant?

- See if a restaurant looks clean before you even sit down. If the restaurant does not look clean to you, you should eat somewhere else.
- Always order your food fully cooked, especially meat, poultry, fish, and eggs. That's what kills germs. When your hot meal comes, make sure it's very hot and thoroughly cooked before you eat it. If it's not, send it back.
- Don't eat eggs that are raw or not fully cooked. These can hide in Caesar salads, custards, and some sauces.
- Don't eat raw oysters.

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Restaurant and Take-Out Safety (cont.)

What about the doggie bag?

Be careful with leftovers. Will you get home within two hours after your meal? If not, leave the leftovers behind.

Your car can get very warm inside. Germs can grow fast. It is best to take your food home right away. That way, your leftovers can go safely into the fridge.

A good rule to follow is: when in doubt, throw it out!

To Learn More ...

US Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Meat and Poultry Hotline
1-800-535-4555

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Food Information Hotline
1-800-SAFE FOOD

Partnership for Food Safety Education
www.fightbac.org
www.foodsafety.gov